

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

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SAM-01 OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /102 W

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R 301757Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4136

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O N D O N 1 1 9 2 7

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG UK EI

SUBJECT: FIFTH ROUND PETROLEUM PRODUCTION LICENSES:

UK-IRELAND OFFSHORE BOUNDARY DISPUTE IN THE MAKING

1. MURRAY (ASSISTANT SECRETARY DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY) CONFIRMS THAT UK DESIGNATION OF THREE AREAS OF UK CONTINENTAL SHELF, ESPECIALLY ONE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST OF CORNWALL, AS AREAS IN WHICH UK RIGHT AND THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES MAY NOW BE EXERCISED IS LIKELY TO PUT ADDED PRESSURE ON BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS OVER MEDIAN LINE SEPARATING BRITISH AND IRISH WATERS. HE FURTHER NORTH FOLLOWING ON HEELS OF BRITISH ANNOUNCEMENT AMOUNTS TO CREATION OF UNFORTUNATE TIT-FOR-TAT SITUATION.

2. MURRAY NOTES THAT FOR APPROXIMATELY A DECADE BOTH COUNTRIES HAD AGREED TO A CORDON SANITAIRE COVERING AREA WITHIN WHICH IT WAS BELIEVED MEDIAN LINE WOULD BE AGREED. ABOUT A YEAR OR SO AGO, HOWEVER, IRISH CLAIMED THAT MEDIAN LINE WAS FURTHER EASTWARD. BEYOND CORDON  
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SANITAIRE. INASMUCH AS CURRENT BRITISH DESIGNATION OF

AREAS SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST OF CORNWALL AS PROSPECTIVELY AVAILABLE TO HOLDERS OF PETROLEUM EXPLORATION LICENSES FALLS WITHIN IRISH "CLAIM" LINE, POTENTIAL FOR NEGOTIATION TURNING INTO FULL-FLEDGED DISPUTE IS OBVIOUS. MURRAY STATES UK AND IRELAND ARE STILL NEGOTIATING, BUT CONCEDES THAT, WHILE THERE MAY BE SOME POSSIBILITY OF MOVEMENT, BOTH COUNTRIES ARE STICKING FIRMLY TO THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. HE DECLINED TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT HMG PURPOSELY WAS ATTEMPTING TO PUSH MATTER TO INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE RESOLUTION OF ISSUE.

3. COMMENT: IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER MAJOR OIL COMPANIES WILL BE ANXIOUS TO BID FOR DESIGNATED AREAS FALLING WITHIN DISPUTED TERRITORY. NONETHELESS PROSPECTS FOR DISCOVERING OIL IN WESTERN APPROACHES ARE CONSIDERED GOOD BASED ON SEISMIC WORK AND LIMITED DRILLING DONE THUS FAR AND SOME SMALLER COMPANIES MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO TRY THEIR LUCK.

ARMSTRONG

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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